

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for enabling a user of a viewing appliance to interactively select information of interest for delivery by an information provider, wherein the viewing appliance has interactive capabilities for enabling the viewer to generate signals that are received by the viewing appliance or by some interactive module associated with the viewing appliance during the display of programming content to the user, and wherein the user is prompted to select information of interest that is related to the displayed programming content within a predetermined region on a screen of the viewing appliance.

2. A television system comprising circuitry and software for enabling a content provider to receive, during a television program, at least one interactively generated request for selected information from a television program viewer, for storing and aggregating multiple requests received during the airing of the television program, and for delivering the selected information to the viewer for implementing a programming-related information store-and-forward functionality.

3. An on-screen area, region, window or stripe that is presented during television programming and that provides a programmer a capability to interactively engage a viewer so as to receive requests for information, where the information is related in some manner to the content of a program or a commercial, and to store-and-forward the requested information to the viewer.

4. An on-screen region configured as a stripe that overlays a predetermined portion of a television display screen, said stripe holding and presenting information that is contextual to television programming that it is overlayed on and cooperating with a system for providing television viewer interactivity to provide the viewer with an ability to request the delivery of information that is related to a subject of, or a topic considered by, the television programming.

5. An on-screen region as in claim 4, wherein the on-screen region is selectively displayed only to those viewers who request that it be displayed.

6. An on-screen region as in claim 4, wherein said region is implemented in

accordance with an Advanced Television Enhancement Forum (ATVEF) standard, wherein triggers are sent to a viewing appliance during Vertical Blanking Intervals (VBIs), wherein the predetermined on-screen region is operated by the triggers so to be present during television programming only when requested by a viewer and providing a programmer a capability to interactively engage the viewer.

7. A method for displaying a program, a commercial or a promotional message to a viewer of a viewing appliance, comprising:

transmitting a television signal such that a display screen displays live or pre-recorded audio/visual programming; and

opening a visually distinct on-screen area, region, window or stripe on the display screen, the on-screen area displaying information that provides the viewer with a capability to interactively obtain selected information from an information provider through a data communications network.

8. A method as in claim 7, comprising:

sending a first trigger signal from a server for prompting the viewer to select whether the viewer wishes to have the on-screen area displayed during a program and, if the viewer so wishes;

operating an input device for sending an affirmative signal to the viewing appliance;

the receipt of the affirmative signal causing the viewing appliance to send a response signal to the server that, in turn, sends a second trigger signal to the viewing appliance for causing the viewing appliance to open said visually distinct on-screen area, region, window or stripe on the display screen of the information appliance.

9. A method as in claim 7, wherein said visually distinct on-screen area, region, window or stripe is translucent or transparent so that a television program may be viewed through it.

10. A method as in claim 7, wherein said visually distinct on-screen area, region,

window or stripe displays icons and text for offering the viewer an opportunity to obtain further information regarding some aspect of the content of a television program being viewed, and wherein upon the viewer indicating acceptance to the offer, sending a signal from the viewing appliance back to a server that in response to receiving the signal records the viewer's acceptance for that particular additional information, and repeating these steps during at least one television program, with the server storing and aggregating a record of the viewer's selections.

11. A method as in claim 10, wherein at or near the end of the television program the server sends a further trigger signal to the viewing appliance that causes the viewing appliance to open said visually distinct on-screen area, region, window or stripe for displaying summary information regarding the viewer's information selections.

12. A method as in claim 11, and further comprising steps of:

prompting the viewer to enter an indication of where the selected information is to be sent; and

forwarding the entered indication to the server so that the selected item(s) of information can be forwarded to the viewer.

13. A method as in claim 12, wherein the indication comprises at least one of a preassigned account number, a membership number and an address, such as an e-mail address or a physical street address.

14. A method as in claim 12, wherein the selected item(s) of information are forwarded to the viewer by a server associated with the television programmer.

15. A method as in claim 12, wherein the selected item(s) of information are forwarded to the viewer by a server associated with an advertiser that provides a commercial for use by the television programmer.

16. An on-screen area, region, window or stripe that is presented during television programming upon request by a viewer and that enables the viewer to initiate requests for specific items of information that are offered to the viewer through the on-screen area, region, window or stripe, where the information is related in some manner to the content of a program or a commercial currently being presented to the viewer,

where a record of said viewer requests are stored for a given program enabling an information provider to store-and-forward the requested information in an electronic manner to the viewer.

17. An on-screen area, region, window or stripe as in claim 16, wherein said viewer is further provided with an opportunity to participate in an interactive application, such as a poll.

18. An on-screen area, region, window or stripe as in claim 16, where the information that can be requested through the on-screen area, region, window or stripe is intended to be relevant to all viewers of the television program.

19. An on-screen area, region, window or stripe as in claim 16, where the information that can be requested through the on-screen area, region, window or stripe is intended to be relevant to viewers within at least one predetermined demographic group.

20. An on-screen area, region, window or stripe as in claim 16, where the information that can be requested through the on-screen area, region, window or stripe is intended to be relevant to a particular viewer.